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**THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER**

That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic — James Connolly

The Fourth Siege of Limerick



NEW YORK JOTTINGS



Michael Herbert, T.D.

HERBERT - SCHERBERT



by Dermot McEvoy

HERBERT - SCHERBERT

BY BERNOT MCEVOY

THERE ARE good times coming for old age pensioners in Limerick city and county if Mr. Michael Herbert T.D. has his way: No, not a few shillings extra for a pint, a packet of fags, or two briquettes, but holidays — more than just a day-trip to Kilkee with sandwiches provided by the St. Vincent de Paul. Free travel to all the EEC countries, just like he has himself, Mr. Herbert has in mind for the pensioners. It is not, of course, Mr. Herbert's intention to confine this bounty to Limerick; it would apply to all pensioners in Ireland and that's why I'm specially enthusiastic about it. Fancy being able to tell the locals in Knocklong that you were within spitting distance of Brigitte Bardot's bare-bottom on the sands at St. Tropez! Who'd worry then that a quarter stone of spuds is 38p in a huxter's shop near the Desmond Bar? Only a churl like me.

Of course, Michael Herbert has a fight on his hands to get the EEC to agree to this. But it is the Golden Jubilee Year of Fianna Fail and any EEC Commissioner with a grain of humanity must agree that a country that can survive fifty years of Fianna Fail is entitled not only to free travel but spending money and a medal to go with it. Something less than the £50-a-day our European Parliament T.D.'s have for expenses would be adequate. All I ask (especially as someone else is paying) is that there should not be any skimping. It should be borne in mind that a hamburger and coffee at not too classy a joint off the Champs Elysees in Paris sets you back £3. As for bread, they call it 'pain' and believe me it is all that when you're paying.

Mr. Herbert, according to the *Limerick Leader*, believes that this scheme can be paid for out of the EEC Social Fund and is making representations about getting it going to Dr. Patrick Hillery, the £20,000-a-year free-of-tax EEC Commissioner. If the last word is with Paddy Hillery, there should be 'no problem' as Senator Brian Lenihan used to say before the electorate gave him the old heave-ho. After all, Paddy in his Fianna Fail days had the dole-money sent by post to the farmers of West Clare when they complained of the cost of motoring in to collect it.

What do I think of the Herbert Holiday Plan? A Jewish friend I explained it to commented: 'Herbert-Scherbert'. In a word, bullshit. And if that's what we get for our money in having Euro-T.D.'s, it's high time Mr. Herbert got the heave-ho and had his activities confined to pulling pints for County Limerick hayseeds.

I AM NOT impressed by all the toing-and-froing, the marches and counter-marches, the protests and deputations arising out of the refusal of the National University of Ireland to give honours degrees to students of Limerick NIHE and the offer of "only" a Pass Degree after four years' study. Degrees are merely pieces of paper; what matters is that the pupils should not only have studied but should have assimilated what they studied and should personally feel they are now ready to begin to learn how to apply the knowledge in a job of work useful to the community which paid for the NIHE facilities. Given a choice between a sheepskin that said I was a Ph.D. and actually being able to read Horace and Proust or build a brick wall to keep out the wind or the neighbour's hens, I would readily forge the shadow for the substance. In other words, I would prefer actually to be educated than just have a parchment that said I was when I might not be. Demand for degrees as such is just another sample of our status-ridden and costive bureaucratic idiocy.

Not that I think the NUI has any right to be uppish, to look down its nose at Limerick NIHE. When was NUI ever devoted to the pursuit of real learning? Its so-called dons think of themselves first as servants of the State—whether of its administration, its broadcasting or banking authorities — and, as in Britain, are always moaning about their salary scales. None of them has opted out of career-hunting, or shown he

values the academic life above mere money. The students of NIHE should rise above the values (or lack of them) displayed so vulgarly by their money-obsessed farmer — or shopkeeper — parents. Of course, if the NIHE boys and girls just want degrees, I do a nice line in multi-coloured bits of paper and, for a small fee, I'll sign degrees outside Eason's any convenient Saturday. Fancy a Ph.D. in underwater basketweaving? A fiver and it's yours. Each 'degree' carries my personal guarantee of money back if you are not put at the head of the queue at the Labour Exchange.

Let any NIHE student ask himself or herself: Will I know one teeny weeny bit more after finishing the four-year-course if I have an honours degree, a pass degree, or no degree? If you think you will, what you need is to start over again at National School; if you think a piece of paper marked 'honours' is going to impress an employer, you're mistaken. Or you've picked an employer who's as big a slob as yourself.

HANDS UP all those gents, clerical and lay, who attended the unveiling of the plaque on the site of Leamy's School in Hartstonge Street. No one coming forward? How wise you are because I've got my cane out. The plaque should have said *Site of Leamy's School* with the dates of its foundation and closure, *tout court* as we were taught at St. Flannan's. But the organisers have to go into latinity, big words, and abortions like 'P.P.U.' (why not Past Pupils' Union so that visitors might understand; why P.P.U. at all, it's the school that is being remembered). That way, of course, it wouldn't be another ego trip for Mayor Thady and there would be no column in the complacent *Leader*. Unfortunately, the plaque says "commemoration" just like that — and spells it just like that. So will Councillor Jim Kemmy, relegated for his 'sins' to the Monuments Committee, invite Mayor Thady to have the spelling put right and save Limerick from being a laughing stock? Misspellings do indeed creep into this column but the *Limerick Socialist* is not, unfortunately, likely to be *aere perennius* and I do not aspire to be a First Citizen so they cause me only a mild chagrin which I soon get out of my system by cursing the printer. But I don't think one is entitled to commemorate a school by bad spelling unless of course, Mayor Thady wants to get into the Guinness Book of Records for low literacy as well as low cunning. And I wouldn't put it past him.

At the same time a city that can name a bridge after a Bishop, Dr. E.T. O'Dwyer, who was a public opponent of the spread of education — he threw the Brothers out of Bruff — may well prefer a sub-literate Mayor. My father told me that in Dr. O'Dwyer's time a senior Alderman, who took the chair in the absence of the Mayor, could barely read and write. Once when faced with a massive letter from Dublin Castle he turned in anguish to the Clerk and said: "Mr. Clerk, what'll I do with this?" and the Clerk off-handedly said, 'Just mark it read, Mr. Mayor'. At which our hero, all smiles, said, 'Pass me the red ink, Mr. Clerk'. At the time I never really believed the story but now I'm beginning to think it was true. Meanwhile, until I get a letter from some responsible member of the Mechanics' Institute, verifying that Thady is attending night classes I shall not be able to give him one of my cut-price Honours Degrees. He might hang it upside down! I wouldn't put it past him.

FARMERS from Limerick and Clare who can afford the fare to Dublin — who else can? — should visit Jury's Hotel, Ballsbridge. I'm not asking them to spend money there; I want them to visit the men's lavatory and, if they're in the mood,

use it. It cost £15,000 — and they say the country's broke! In the words of Mr. Michael McCarthy, the hotel group's managing director — and I find his words puzzling — it is "the only marketing-oriented toilet in the country". This £15,000 marketing-oriented shithouse has soft lighting, dark terazzo-style tiling, a magic-eye flush-system activated automatically when you walk through an invisible beam, and an electronically operated hand-towel dispenser. In my view, the whole caboodle could be a tourist attraction in its own right, a watering place to rival Kilkee. Naturally, I found a flaw: it's no good if you're constipated. But Mr. McCarthy — his parents used a field and scrutch grass-is working on that; he gets an automatic Honours Degree: he'll find the parchment in the third cubicle from the left, the one reserved for Euro-T.D.'s and other fat cats, the one labelled Herbert-Scherbert.

CHAMPAGNE AND oysters were the order of the day at the Irish Management Institute's conference at Killarney where 350 delegates and 150 delegates' wives were addressed by Richie Ryan, the Minister for Finance, who thought the razzamataz sufficiently important to arrive by taxpayers' helicopter. He told the cigar-smoking delegates that we would all have to work harder and tighten our belts or else . . . Then he flew off and the delegates returned to the serious business of drinking. One delegate, a captain of Irish industry according to the *Sunday World*, breakfasted on a bottle of champagne, a jug of orange juice and a packet of Anadin. No, I have not lost the thread of all that: the 'we' in Richie's phrase, the 'we' who will have to work harder and tighten our belts is you and me, not the bosses, the delegates of the IMI. And obviously we shall have to if the IMI is to continue to be able to afford champagne and orange juice and to qualify for Anadin in the mornings. Of course, we will get our reward in the next world . . . or so we're told by the Redemptorists. Pie in the sky!

Meanwhile, I see that the farmers whose Income Tax we are paying are protesting against proposed wage increases for food-processing workers and the Department of Agriculture's attempt to make them pay more for the veterinary inspection of stock going to the meat factories. What a cheek! Is the wage and salary earner forever to be mulcted so that these greedyguts, these parasites can fill their car boots with groceries and their deep-freezers with the choicest sirloin and fowl? Comrades, we are governed by gangsters and their stooges! See that you give them the heave-ho, see that you send someone to the Dail who'll expose this exploitation! You know who I mean and he is not someone who'll tell you 'keep on taking the tablets' and send you out of the surgery.

EVER SINCE I was overcharged for bed and breakfast in Newcastle West I have had a grudge against the place. I see from Mossie Harnett's memoirs in the *Leader* that I was right, the people there pelted him and the 1916 volunteers with rotten eggs as they trained for the big day. On balance though I feel that it was just as well the volunteers did no more than parade at Glenquin Castle that Easter Sunday because "a large force of armed RIC in formation" was there to watch them and most of the volunteers were unarmed though "a few carried '98-style pikes". Mossie concluded his saga of a disappointing day: "And as we marched homewards the heavens opened and the rain fell in torrents". I felt for him and for Major Jimmy MacInerney, the Director of Operations, who had gold shamrocks embroidered on his new uniform, until I realised that those RIC men must have got just as wet. I'd be inclined therefore to put it as a draw on my coupon. By the way, if getting wet is remarkable enough to include in one's memoirs, I've been drenched in two continents.

ON MY way to Limerick last month I shared a carriage with Herbert-Scherbert. I did not know him then and he did not know me. There he was all the time beavering away, writing no doubt important speeches and memoranda about Strasbourg on Dail Eireann-headed notepaper. They never stop these dedicated £50-a-day men. Of course, I knew he was Fianna Fail long before Jim Kemmy told me at Limerick station: H-S

I noted, was reading the *Irish Press* and you really have to be dedicated to read that rag and damn near illiterate too. I just wonder will H-S be sending in a monograph to the Press about how they forcibly feed geese in Strasbourg until their livers are diseased and how they train pigs to sniff out truffles and then how the livers and the truffles are combined to make that expensive delicacy, *pate de foie gras aux truffes*. Geese-stuffer and pig-trainer to Limerick County Committee of Agriculture? I bet a Fianna Fail man gets it.

THE MORASS in which our marriage and family laws flounder was underlined recently by an advertisement in a Dublin newspaper announcing the adoption by an unmarried mother of her own child. It is the first time that such action was taken; it makes the child legitimate — not that I've ever regarded any child as illegitimate: there are no illegitimate children, only illegitimate parents — and entitled to inherit. It gives me an idea: I am going to adopt *myself*. That should stop people calling me a bastard, except of course, people like Herbert-Scherbert but I don't mind.

Mention my name in Jury's and you'll get double stamps!

DR. JOHN O'CONNELL

Promotion or rather its absence, brings Dr. John O'Connell to mind. You see, John was expecting a Ministerial or at least a Parliamentary Secretary's post after the Coalition victory. He had a lot going for him: ability, intelligence and a massive poll-topping first preference vote in Dublin South-West in the general election, an indication of his first-class constituency clinic network. Dr. John is very much his own man. He is very rich, employs a private P.R.O., and has frequently acted independently of the party: bringing Wilson and the Provos together for secret talks. This stance, ignoring the machinery of the party, aroused enmity and jealousy amongst the leadership and his fellow deputies so no office for John. John in turn hasn't been slow to hammer the party when he could safely do so. He'll walk a few steps with Noel Browne and the left but he won't commit himself to them. You see, John doesn't have a basic ideological commitment; his major commitment is to O'Connell. With the by-election in South-West, his play should be interesting, especially now that Brendan Halligan, the party's general secretary and a shrewd, ambitious operator, has been selected as the Labour Candidate. Win or lose, Halligan could prove the biggest threat to O'Connell's dominance in the constituency since the death of Sean Dunne. As well as his control over the national party organisation, Halligan has had plenty of television coverage and his face should be familiar to most of the voters. But the key to the result of the by-election is whether O'Connell's famed election machine will be put at Halligan's disposal. Or could it be that Dr. John O'Connell has done a deal with the Labour Party bosses? Could he have been promised a post in the next Coalition Government in return for not having opposed Senator Halligan's nomination and for delivering his votes in the by-election?

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NEW YORK JOTTINGS

by BILLY LEONARD

We have had more than our share of military madmen. There was a time once in Vietnam when a U.S. commander justified the destruction of a peaceful village with these words: "We had to destroy it in order to save it".

That same crazy logic is now being applied to New York City. Under a three-year financial gimmick and debt moratorium imposed by faceless moguls, the banks have been saved and the city has been doomed.

Take the new city budget for 1976-'77. It totals 12 and a half billion dollars. Of that amount, almost 20 per cent is in debt service costs. Crazy, what?

Meanwhile, schools, hospitals and out-patient clinics are being closed to meet the budget crisis. Teachers, cops, firemen and hospital workers in the thousands have been fired. And 28 drug-free rehabilitation centers have shut their doors, turning four thousand former heroin addicts into the streets. As a result, crime is zooming.

Yes, the bankers and brokers are in clover. So are their stooges, the clubhouse hacks. But the subway fare has been jumped to 50 cents "to restore investors confidence". What a laugh. And half the borough of the Bronx is a wasteland of burned-out or deserted apartment buildings.

It's the old story: The rich get richer and the poor poorer. Will we ever rid our house of these bandits?

The photograph, front page is most of our dailies, shocked the conscience of America. That was before we were inured to torture interrogation centers, tiger cages, defoliation and all the My Lais that we visited with arrogant power on the hapless people of Vietnam. The photograph, taken on a Saigon Street in 1968, showed the South Vietnamese police chief shooting to death a handcuffed prisoner at point-blank range. It was obscene and it spelled out better than words the nature of the murderous and criminal war we were raging.

The executioner's name was Loan. While he was police chief, thousands of hapless people were tortured and executed in the hellholes of Saigon and South Vietnam. A valuable ally by official American standards.

Loan, a war criminal if ever there was one, is in this country now. He was spirited out in those last, mad days when the Saigon puppet regime was collapsing. But even other refugees at Guam and Camp Pendleton gave him a wide berth. His name evoked only silence and fear.

The former police chief has a comfortable berth now. He works as secretary for an unnamed private company. In addition, he and his wife manage a restaurant which serves Vietnamese dishes as well as American fare. The restaurant is located in Burke, Virginia. It's a stone's throw from Langley, the headquarters of the C.I.A. Any connection?

Also in Virginia but tucked away in rolling hills is an expertly camouflaged underground complex. Dug deep into the earth, the vast subterranean living and sleeping quarters are constructed on many levels. The deepest — and presumably the safest — is reserved for our gallant leaders in the event of a Russian nuclear attack. The designers are said to believe our

heroes could survive a projected 10-year period of lethal radioactivity above ground.

Comes word now that President John F. Kennedy had a personal bomb shelter just 11 minutes by helicopter from his vacation home in Hyannisport, Massachusetts. The top secret survival) alir is located on a 45-acre Navy base on the vacation island of Nantucket. Kennedy would have been rushed to this underground haven if Doomsday dawned while he was vacationing.

The hush-hush bomb shelter, built at goodness knows how great an expense, remains tenantless. A reporter who managed to hoodwink lax Navy security with the help of an enlisted man recently made it through a steel door into a round tunnel. The tunnel was lined with steel and taller than a man. Beyond that was another portal secured with an airlock. The reporter was told that was the end of the line for him. In a national emergency, President Kennedy, after identifying himself, would be admitted to this inner chamber where an attendant would gesture to a shower room. The President would then wash off any radioactive contamination and drop his 'hot' clothes through a slot. That done he would proceed into a huge subterranean chamber, 48 feet long by 25 feet wide. This was command headquarters, sumptuously furnished and ready for the long haul.

Wonder if JFK had a contingency plan to air lift some dancing girls to his underground shelter?

An obscure former Governor of Georgia has confounded all the political soothsayers and very likely may win the Democratic nomination for President. Jimmy Carter, millionaire peanut farmer, is piling up impressive delegate strength, enough perhaps to stampede the Democratic National Convention next month into giving him the prize.

Carter's big break came when he won the big industrial state of Pennsylvania, defeating both Senator Henry Jackson who had the backing of the labour bosses and Congressman Morris Udall, the liberal contender. Jackson, who was regarded as a stalking horse for Senator Hubert Humphrey bowed out as an active candidate shortly after. Humphrey himself, who lost three bids for the Presidency, then decided not to risk a direct primary challenge to Carter. He is out of the running but still hopes for a draft call in the event of a deadlocked convention.

The Carter blitz has stunned the political pros. Carter mystifies them; they don't understand his appeal to a broad spectrum of the electorate. The man himself could have stopped out of a Frank Capra movie, a Mr. Smith marching on Washington with the Plain People of America in serried ranks behind him. This unnerves the politicians. They can't cope with it, the more so since Carter wears his hair in the mod fashion, flashes a wide Pepsodent smile and talks of loving your neighbour.

The Carter appeal is not really that mystifying. He is, in effect, telling Americans they are basically good and kind and believe in Mother and Apple Pie. They like that kind of stroking after Watergate and the horrors of Vietnam.

Finally — an item to raise the hackles of the uptight. Some of our fairest ladies plan to join the tourist crush on Washington this summer when they gather for the third annual National Hookers Convention. The idea is to mount a national campaign to decriminalize prostitution. The San Francisco-based group calls itself COYOTE. That stands for "Call Off Your Old Tired Ethies". The founder — or "chairmadam" as she calls herself — says she expects several hundred hookers from the East and West coasts, as well as a chartered plane load from Europe.

Any takers from Mother Ireland?

**GET THE
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EVERY MONTH**

**PART
EIGHTEEN**

**BY
P.J. RYAN**

THE BATTLE OF KIDD'S CAFE

Two hundred yards uphill in the fifth block at 49, O'Connell Street, the Diehards had barricaded the street and billeted themselves in Kidds Cafe. They thus had a line of fire down O'Connell Street and Patrick Street as far as the Town Hall, a total range of over 300 yards. With their customary concern for the welfare of their men, the Diehards had been placed in that commanding position because of the splendid culinary facilities available at Kidd's Cafe. In the Cafe were a resident chef and staff who normally prepared and served rare and exotic dishes, such as the pirate king, Captain Kidd of the Carribean, might have ordered for his personal pleasure. The Cafe was provisioned by the Diehards with the goods normally available in the city.

In the hands of the chef, the potato, the egg and various meats took on a new and sublime grandeur, when enriched and embellished with the fruits, spices and condiments of the Indies and the Orient, which were normally served in Kidd's Cafe. Those rich foods may have given a wanton belligerence to the Diehards, whose duties were to deny the use of the street to the Staters. The Diehards had a line of retreat from the back gardens to the Glentworth Hotel. Their orders were, in the event of a massed attack by the Staters, send for reinforcements.

The Staters could cross O'Connell Street only at Cruise's Hotel where they had a trench and a barrier. Anything that moved was shot at by the Diehards. The only thing safe in the Street was the life size wooden figure of a Chinese Mandarin, overhead a grocer's shop opposite Kidd's Cafe. The benevolent looking figure in scarlet and gold was mounted between the two windows, sixteen feet from the ground. The figure was mounted there for almost a century and had counted the passing years with calm serene indifference. The Diehards regarded him as a mascot and would not blast him from his high perch. The Diehards in the Cafe were armed with German Mauser rifles which fired a copper-coated leaden bullet of almost a half-inch diameter. It could pierce a three-eighth inch steel plate at one hundred yards. They were splendid weapons for shooting elephant or hippopotami, shattering the conceit and bones of those rugged beasts. No one ever survived a Mauser bullet; they died. The Mauser rifles had a shattering effect on the morale of the Staters, who dared not appear in O'Connell St. without suffering the loss of men and prestige.

At this time the Staters did not have an armoured car to run up O'Connell St. and declare their ambitions by cleaning the windows of Kidds' Cafe with a Vickers gun. It can now be seen that the Staters had a problem. Their problem was to avoid the occupational hazard of perforation of the cranium by a Mauser bullet, but Collins had said to those men: "Go in and take the city". The most difficult problem often has a simple solution. Einstein had solved a problem and expressed a universal concept in a simple equation. The Staters could not go up O'Connell St. in the open, but they could tunnel their way underground to Kidd's Cafe. In this way they would not fritter away their resources in futile acts of valour. Starting in the basement of William St., O'Connell St. corner, they broke down each dividing wall where it was weakest. With steel bars and sledge hammers, with picks and shovels, they broke through into the next basement at the fireplace. Where there was no fireplace they broke through two feet of bricks. Where there was a fireplace a mere nine inches of brick encouraged their progress.

In this manner they reached the underground vaults under Thomas St. The ends of the vaults or cellars form the walls of the underground sewers. Those end walls were broken down and the sewers were crossed with the heavy wooden doors of the vault and so they entered the vaults of the next block of

The Fourth Siege of Limerick

buildings. What normally would be a wearying and toilsome task became a playful frolic undertaken with a sense of adventure. The Staters had to confine themselves to the task in hand. They were to approach in silence the "Men of the Mausers" and silence them. As an opening was made in each dividing wall, some men crawled through to the next wall, while others enlarged and cleared the opening behind them.

The daylight shining through the windows of each basement lighted their way and showed them the extent of their progress. In this manner they worked forward and upward until they reached the fourth block which contained Kidd's Cafe. Looking upward across the street they could see the serene figure of the Chinese Mandarin in scarlet and gold. The colours suggested caution and the gold wisdom of the Chinese proverb: "Softly, softly, catchee monkey".

From this moment on, the Staters worked with caution, with prudence and in silence. Every morticed brick became like a golden nugget to be prised loose from its bed and passing from hand to hand be laid aside with reverent care.

By midday of the second day, they reached the last barrier to the basement of Kidd's Cafe. Though ever so careful in their work, a cascade of falling bricks alarmed the garrison, some of whom came downstairs to investigate the cause. On seeing the uninvited visitors emerging through the opening, they dashed back upstairs with the alarming news, "The Staters are making a massed attack on the Cafe".

The orders of the Diehards: In the event of a massed attack, send for reinforcements. Each of those men were dedicated and zealous men; each felt that, only by personal sacrifice and zeal, could reinforcements be brought quickly to the scene. Each felt that it were better to go in person rather than depend on a messenger who might prove to be unreliable. In their anxiety to comply with their orders, they dropped their loaded Mausers and, dashing out the back, hastened to the Glentworth Hotel with the utmost speed. The Staters waited in vain for the return of the garrison. They collected fifteen loaded Mauser rifles on the premises. Going out on O'Connell St., they took possession of the barricade. They now had fire control of O'Connell St. from the Town Hall to O'Connell Monument, a distance of 400 yards. This was a notable gain without the loss of life or wading through their brothers blood. Looking up to the red and gold figure above the barricade, they could see a smile on the face of the Chinaman.

(To be continued).

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Limerick Corporation unanimously approved of a proposal to purchase eighteen acres of land at Longpavement as a refuse dump. The City Manager (Mr. M. Macken) said that . . . a wall would be built around it and a screen of trees put along the road by the side of the river. The manager said there was considerable misunderstanding in that people seemed to think the dump would be a second Corcanree. That was not the case

("Limerick Chronicle" May 1956).

Casey's Column.... by John Casey

THE SAN CLEMENTE CONNECTION

Every man is in himself a force for progress or change, for stagnation or decay. People frequently underestimate their own importance in shaping the future. Maybe this is more so here than elsewhere: the Catholic Church has been telling us for the past 150 years that we cannot think for ourselves and that they alone had all the answers. The number of people willing to be herded by the Church has decreased but the propaganda has permeated the national consciousness. An example can be seen in the feeling of helplessness which sends people scurrying to T.D.'s to secure what frequently are their rights. There is the well known story of the late James Collins T.D. (Gerry's father) writing to an old man to tell him he had secured the old-age pension for him!

People can influence events. Even a letter to the paper has some importance. Surprising though the number of people who haven't the initiative to write the letter, to take a stand. Physical courage we don't lack but moral courage we do. People prefer to go with the herd than stand alone. Standing alone is hard and lonely but sometimes it has its rewards. I once took a stand on a small issue in a remote part of the country. The local newspaper, an obscure sheet gave the issue some publicity. In truth, there wasn't much to write about in that part of the world. But as a result of the stand and the flicker of limelight I won a friend. Some two weeks later, a parcel of books, magazines and newspapers arrived at my home. They were posted in San Clemente, California. (No, the sender wasn't Richard Nixon!). I never did discover who the donor was but for two or three years at infrequent intervals these roughly bound parcels came across from the shores of the Pacific.

The parcels never contained a note, a name or a return address. However, over the years I learned something about the sender. He was a member of the American Socialist Party: every parcel contained three or four back issues of the Party paper. It was here I read some of the writings of Daniel De Leon and learned of Connolly's connection with the American Socialist Party and his disputes with De Leon and De Leon's debates with Eugene Debs. And it was good to know that the Socialist Labour Party of America was still alive and publishing a paper. He seemed to be an admirer of Joseph Conrad's because a Conrad novel turned up in most parcels among glossy magazines on Soviet life and erudite books on Russian economics and the "Dynamics of Soviet Society" written by learned professors from Harvard and M.I.T. during the fifties. I dipped into these which is what my old friend also did I suspect. He probably sent them on to me wrongly believing that I was educated and could make some sense of them. Or, having dipped like me, he may have come to the conclusion that they were musty old tracts of American propaganda being pawned off as scientific analyses and that they should be exiled as far from home as possible. So he sent them 6,000 miles away in the brown paper parcels.

I built up a mental picture of the San Clemente propagandist. He was an old man in retirement: the parcels sometimes contained pages from old folks magazines and the address was written in a shaky hand — the hand of an Irish emigrant. A certain hesitancy and an ignorance of punctuation indicated that his schooling, like that of most Irish emigrants, ended at best in fourth class.

But he was a man of independent mind, for only such could subscribe to the Socialist Labour Party. As we know only too well, the majority of Irish-Americans are to be found in the most conservative ethnic sections of American society. In the recent U.S. school riots some of the racists had the most unmistakable Irish names. This is easy enough to explain: they are among the poor whites, still insecure on the social ladder and afraid of losing their status if they intermingle and marry blacks. They'd like to forget that they're "Micks". They

will never dine with the Cabots or the Lodges but they like the bit of lace curtain and no black is going to take it away. Fear feeds on ignorance — and ignorance is the most useful tool any establishment has.

The American media was and still is the most powerful, and pervasive propaganda system in the world. It may seem to be faltering at present, but that is illusory; it is merely refining itself. It no longer finds it useful to shout about the atrocities of Castro (*Reader's Digest* in the fifties) and the abominations of Russia after America's mass murder adventure in Vietnam where they bombed the entire country to impose "freedom" on a people who wanted neither the Americans nor their concept of freedom. The media pumps out one persistent message, phrased and rephrased in different words but essentially the same: a good American supports capitalism, everyone who doesn't is a Commie, a Red. I once worked for a rich New Yorker who wouldn't read the *New York Times* believing it to be a subversive newspaper. Liberals are Commies was his attitude.

Then there was the documentary programme on the Nazi Extermination of the Jews. The programme was put together without ever mentioning gas or the gas chambers. The programmes sponsors were a gas company. The propaganda is churned out directly in the magazines, the papers and the political speeches. The cinema was used but here things have changed. Where once the movie moguls ruled and commanded, the tune is whistled now by the directors and creative artists who draw their money from different sources to finance a film. But the state controls television, for the most part, and makes use of it to disseminate propaganda. Notice the indirect use of the propaganda in programmes like *Hawaii Five O*.

If the police have the job of protecting a diplomat from a socialist country one gets the impression that McGarritt would secretly prefer to put a bullet in him but that he has to do his duty. It is a non-ending engulfing flood of propaganda. So what chance has the poor frequently ill-educated, emigrant? Glad to be allowed into the society, he has bent over backwards to accommodate the ruling class. And he has no protection from his employer or the state. The biggest unions in the States, the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters, have been controlled by gangsters, like Meaney and Hoffa, whose activities if fully known would make Al Capone look like a Sunday-school mitcher. There was "Red" Mike Quill and we still have Caesar Chavez but they were and are swamped in a swamp of corruption. The emigrants were confused and went with the herd. Some of them understood, however dimly, that they were being exploited but they couldn't and wouldn't stand against the tyranny and turned instead to the warm opiate of the club and saloon. Alcoholism is rampant among Irish emigrants, especially in the fifty-plus group.

But even the young emigrants have a remarkable capacity for absorbing all the prejudices of their new society. A young emigrant once asked me if I'd like my daughter to marry a "nigger" (the usual question) after I had indicated sympathy for the blacks position in society. To which I replied that the man's character would be of more interest to me than his pigmentation. The same man never allowed one to forget that he had fought for his country against the "gooks" of Vietnam. He would also tell me that since I didn't agree with the system I should leave the country and cease living off them. Living off anybody I decidedly was not. I worked out the days and nights for a low wage and paid my dues to Meaney's AFL-CIO.

But to return to the mysterious comrade on the Pacific. I haven't got a parcel for three, or four years now. I suppose he's dead. I will never really know what he believed or thought, or even what he achieved through his political activity. But he would seem to have been one who saw through the system and dissented. And that made him a rare enough breed among his Irish-American fellows.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

D-DAY AT KNOCKMORE

On Sunday, May 16th, I happened by providential chance to be present at a Fianna Fail back-slapping gala in Knockmore, Bruree. The occasion marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of that party, celebrated in, chivalrous fashion by the handing over of Dev's ancestral home to Mr. Donnacha O Briain as trustee for life. This golden handshake set local party funds back by £5,000.

The day was bleak and foreboding, as the rain dribbled down in misty torrents on the herd that gathered to hear the noises blowing in the wind. We heard from Gerry Collins nationalistic aspirations that renewed the mob's faith in Republicanism. The diatribe was reminiscent of the pre-arms smuggling era. Seemingly, the word is out loud and clear to all echelons of the Cumann hierarchy that nationalism is back in fashion, as it is now an expedient crutch to lean on. Mr. Collins, straining his vocal cords, repetitively thanked, in both Irish and English and Irish again Miss Sile de Valera the new found toy of his party. She wound herself up for five nostalgic patronizing minutes, then faded into obscurity for the time being.

Mr. Donnacha O Briain, a veteran of the "troubles" and a former parliamentary secretary to Mr. de Valera, then sang a very old tune. The vibrations were pleasant to the ears but insulting to the mind. Clutching the microphone with tenacious loyalty, he rose to the occasion by telling his susceptible audience "that their first loyalty, above all others, was towards Fianna Fail". Big farmers on the dole bashfully chuckled — Taca is still alive and well and living off the land.

We were also treated to a speech written in Dublin for Jack Lynch, read on surrogate authority by a party hack from the environs of Bruree. He plodded through the script with respectful hesitancy, like a dinner through a bog, and we heard again what we had heard many times before. If one listened long enough one might even be inclined to believe in it.

Deputy Michael Noonan was last but not least on the bandwagon of political polish. By this, juncture the rain was mercilessly lashing against the plastic canvas that kept the elitist party safe and dry from the angry elements. If the truth be known they were a very "wet" bunch indeed. But again the needle stuck obstinately in the spinning groove, as the Deputy gave us a taste of the "Fianna Fail Loves you" routine. He then proceeded to throw mud that in such company is sure to stick. At the mention of Conor Cruise O'Brien's name, the

This letter was submitted for publication by one of our readers who stopped off at Bruree on Sunday 16th May during the "official" opening of the childhood home of Eamon de Valera. The affair was exploited as a Fianna Fail publicity jamboree and the cynical machine-men predictably pulled out all the old, discredited party "aims". Jack Lynch, with a weather eye on the Conor Cruise O'Brien/Dr. Newman controversy, sent a script down from Dublin for the occasion. The script was carefully tailored to re-assure the Co. Limerick Fianna Fail faithful and warned that "if the family unit were to collapse, then society itself will inevitably collapse". After this emotive observation, Gerry Collins once again aired his brass neck when he claimed that "more Irish is spoken now than in the past". And, in an attempt to justify this piece of hypocrisy, Collins concluded his remarks with the few ritualistic words of Irish. Deputy Michael Noonan confirmed that the twin aims of Fianna Fail were still "national unity and the restoration of Irish" and pledged that "these principles would never be dropped". The cottage at Bruree will serve a purpose: it is a tomb for the dead "twin aims" of de Valera and his party.

Knockmore hounds grovelled with sadistic pleasure, as the *bete noire* of the Coalition was being ravished verbally. The meeting degenerated into a carnival of abuse, as the dangling carrot "Republicanism" baited the slow-witted ass.

The scene had all the aura of a political circus dwindling slowly into tragic comedy.

I started to laugh — an ignorant but natural reflex. Deputy Noonan finally wound up with a last gust of wind by suggesting that enough had been said.

Alighting from the platform, the entourage proceeded towards the lintel of Dev's door, spewed with the precious blood of innocent lambs led to a Civil War slaughter. The bastions of ascendancy walked past untarnished, unfettered. The mob clamoured to gain admittance. The door closed and like many a time before the faithful followers were left standing in the cold.

NIAMH FAHY

RADIO VIBES

BY JIM PHELAN

As the sun rises lazily in the East, we greet the lovely city by the Shannon, the city of broken promises. . . Oh Limerick, mother of all that is brave in the nation . . . the nation is now a safer place knowing where each and every one of your citizens stand on the questions of abortion, birth control, rent control, detention, unemployment, tax rebate and social security . . . not to mention the democratic and republican viewpoints so ably espoused by your able, public-spirited leaders. And who would not be inspired by the noble sentiments expressed by your elected first citizen, "If you can't do a good turn don't do a bad one"? What profound wisdom! What could the poor people do without such a political intellect? How could the people get their city's ball rolling in the national superbowl if their Mayor didn't exist? Every day the citizens gather in their living rooms glued to their radio sets, listening to hear their

first citizen in all his glory.

We know more about the people of Limerick than they suspect. Yes, we know that they are a rugged, independent people who speak their minds when they are being interviewed by R.T.E., B.B.C. or by the Gayboy himself. We have seen the Limerick people in their supermarkets, their general stores and their Town Hall offering sage opinions on everything from Angola to the Southill rodeo. We hear anew the praises of W.W.G. . . . the voice of the Parish speaks . . . the squelchy feel of packet and tripe. The mere mention of eyebones, breastbones and backbones is enough to make the mouth water, the body feel weak and in need of sustenance. Even stories of the embattled walls pale into insignificance beside Mary Ann Walsh's pigs' toes. Her toes won over hearts in a big way.

But our fleeting visit is coming to an end. It is time to bade farewell to Limerick, the graveyard of political dreams. We hope to return at this time next year. Meanwhile, keep the home fires burning with copies of the "Leader" and the "Weekly Echo", but on no account burn copies of the "Socialist" or the "Star". Stars are for shining and socialists for equality. *Au Revoir.*

The Brotherhood

TRADES COUNCILS EXIST in practically every city in the United Kingdom. They provide a local forum for trade unions and in many cases they predated the establishment of national unions. Many of these councils originally sent delegates to the TUC but this was stopped in the late 19th century. Such a body is the Belfast Trades Council. Founded way back in the 1880's it was the very first of its type in Ireland and appeared long before the Irish TUC.

The Belfast Trades Council has thus a long though not entirely distinguished history for it has been marked by continued struggle between unionists and nationalists. In recent years it is clear that unionist workers have attached less and less importance to the Trades Council and have accordingly relinquished control of it to nationalists. Their view of the Belfast Trades Council's lack of importance is of course true; trades councils generally play a much less significant part in trade union affairs than formerly. Nevertheless the Belfast Trades Council is often asked to send delegates to address similar meetings in other parts of the United Kingdom. The impression which must be left by these delegates is that Northern Ireland trade unionists are republicans to a man and being prevented from expressing their real political feelings by the lack of a Bill of Rights.

Evidence of the attitude of the leaders of the Belfast Trades Council is to be found in the recent experiences of a trade union which tried to affiliate to that Council. The union, which is a British white-collar one, has a policy of affiliating to local branches of the nearest trades council. It had neglected to do this for Belfast and recently the local branch attempted to set the matter right by applying for membership of the Trades Council. To their surprise they were informed that because they were not affiliated to "Congress" they were not eligible for membership. Rather indignantly they replied that they had been members of the TUC for many years, only to be informed that "Congress" in the context meant the ICTU.

The union branch insisted on a meeting with representatives from the Trade Council in order to get clarification of what was being said. At the meeting, the union representatives pointed out that Belfast was in the U.K., that the U.K. trade union organisation was the TUC and that therefore they had surely the right to belong to their local trades council. Not so was the response. This was Ireland and the trade union organisation in Ireland was the ICTU. Incredulously the union men pointed out that for the vast majority of trade unionists in Northern Ireland the ICTU was irrelevant in normal trade union matters of wages and conditions. After all, they asked, who was at that moment engaged upon negotiations over the next wages agreement for workers in N.I., Len Murray of the TUC or Ruairi Roberts of the ICTU?

Furthermore, they pointed out that besides the purely trade union objections to the ICTU, many of their members would have political objections to belonging to a body which made no secret of its support of nationalism. To this, the Belfast Trades Council representatives reply was that "we all had our problems with bigots". Thus were the majority of Northern Ireland trade unionists dismissed by the nauseous leadership of the Trades Council.

It was therefore made abundantly clear that unless the trade union joined the ICTU, against its economic and political instincts, it could not affiliate to the Belfast Trades Council. Incidentally, it took the union delegates about two hours to get this unequivocal statement from the Trades Council. Their leadership are experts at mouthing inane verbiage which has the effect of fuzzing issues. It is this capacity for banal cliché that allows them to operate on several levels of understanding.

They have not got the guts to be forthright republicans because their position as trade unionists could not possibly be maintained after such an unambiguous stand. They therefore disguise it by formally disassociating themselves from the

Provos and so on, while all the time pursuing politics which are unmistakably nationalist in objective. All this is done in the name of trade union solidarity and brotherhood, which puts opposition to these manoeuvres in a morally inferior position. Few people are capable of the fervent attachment to bureaucracy, scheming and manoeuvring which the leadership of the Belfast Trades Council have demonstrated — most people prefer to work and argue openly and they therefore give up. And these tricksters are confirmed once more in their own righteousness and worth.

(Reprinted from "Workers Weekly").

IN BRIEF

The Director General of R.T.E. Oliver Maloney, recently called a meeting of television producers. It seems the meeting got off to a good start, everyone being nice and polite until Maloney began to tick off the producers for indolence, whereupon a barrage was unleashed that would have made Dolly Fossett blush. They told him that they were expected to make programmes on outrageously low budgets and that money was being spent on everything but programmes. There was no shortage of money for expensive engineering equipment and for the salaries of highly paid administrators. The administrative staff outnumber the production staff 7 to 1. Any notions that Maloney had about his popularity were confirmed and it is doubtful if he'll take on the producers again. Meanwhile, R.T.E. 2 forges (literally) ahead: the engineers have it well in hand. Frank Hall did a skit on it where one character remarked that it would be the best administered station in Europe and there would be no trouble from production staff: there would be no production staff!

At the time this is being written, the fourth official strike since December is in progress at R.T.E. with members from other unions refusing to pass pickets. There is non-ending strife between management and workers, caused mainly by management's belief that they can and will run the station without consultation. The management seem to believe that it is still the nineteenth century and that unions can be ignored. They'll learn, if not after the sixth, after the sixtieth strike; in the meantime, Conor Cruise O'Brien might decide that the Director General and the Head of Personnel would be better employed in private industry, something less arduous like running a chicken farm.

So Jim Callaghan is the new British Prime Minister. For all the difference that will make, says you. Reminds one of the road worker's comment on Daniel O'Connell and his glorious victories for Ireland: something to the effect that he'd still be breaking stones. However, Callaghan seemed determined to get off to a bad start by demoting Barbara Castle and Foot supporters and promoting obscure personal followers. Outwardly it was a "gentlemanly" contest in the best tradition of the House of Commons. Not so. *Private Eye* did a piece on Callaghan's friendship with Sir Julian Hodge, known as the Usurer of the Valleys, whose companies were involved in pyramid selling. Indeed, the police fraud squad were called in to investigate the activities of one of the firms. Sir Julian, of course, was abhorred by the activities of his underlings and disclaimed all knowledge of their practices. Even though, as the man said, the buck did stop with him. At any rate, Foot's supporters, regarding Callaghan as having about as much socialism in his bones as the famous reed in the wind, photostated the *Private Eye* article and circulated it amongst Labour M.P.'s. Callaghan nearly did his nut. "Not a word of it is true", he said (*Daily Mail* April 6th). What wasn't true? His friendship with Hodge? Hardly, they have been photographed together frequently. The allegations about Hodge's practices? These hardly fell within Jim's ambit to answer. The results are that Callaghan gave the Footses the boot.